



STEVEN A. HIND (1943-)

For over twenty-five years, Steven Hind has published poetry about life in the Great Plains and Flint Hills of Kansas, including the small towns. Robert Frost is an influence, as well as fellow Kansas poet William Stafford. Hind's language appears simple, and his people are salt of the earth. Tragedy, extreme weather, and economic disasters complicate the rural experience. Nonetheless, Hind also celebrates the vivid natural life of the region, where animals may be as distinctive as next door neighbors. "Blue Heron" is an example of this.

Many Kansans are avid bird watchers, whether formal members of the Audubon Society or just roadside observers. Hundreds of bird species migrate through the mid-continent skies, and many remain as year-round residents. Great blue herons are colorful water birds found along river banks and marshy areas. The poet accurately acknowledges the bird's habitat, which is "Behind the pond." Hind shows how poetry involves research and observation.

This poem could be a simple snapshot of the bird—until I look more closely at Hind's language and see how he enlivens the description with comparisons. Nearly every line challenges me to see two images at once: willows sound like a silk scarf unfurling; the heron lowers and raises its head like a jackknife closing and opening; guitar frets appear on the water; and the great bird's wings are like oars of a rowboat. The ending line, "the bright gravel of stars," is an inversion, where earth and sky reverse positions, echoing the poem's theme. This dizzying image shows the possibilities for language to surprise and delight.

GREAT BLUE HERON

Behind the pond under a whispering
scarf of willows, heron does his lone
knifewalk beside the wind-fretted waters.
His deft movements make a death
defying progress: a life of mud transmuted

into sky life as he rows away on a river
of air and its melody of coyote song
through cedars beyond cedars, their
silhouettes swallowed by darkness
beneath the bright gravel of stars.

Education: Steven Hind was born and raised near Madison, in the Flint Hills. He earned a BA from Emporia State University and an MA (1970) from the University of Kansas.

Career: Hind taught at Hutchinson Community College and Topeka High School for 36 years. His books are *Familiar Ground* (1980); *That Trick of Silence* (1990); *In A Place With No Map*, (1997); and *Loose Change of Wonder* (2006, Ks. Notable Book Award). His CD *Waking in the Flint Hills* is available by writing to 503 Monterey Way, Hutchinson, KS 67502.

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